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SUBJECT: IN BAUCHI STATE, TWO MORE WOMEN SENTENCED TO DEATH BY STONING FOR ADULTERY

1. Summary. Bauchi State Shari's courts sentenced two unmarried women to death by stoning for adultery on the evidence of their pregnancies, while releasing their partners for lack of evidence. Both women have appealed and are receiving legal assistance. Since the adoption in 2000 of Shari'a in 12 states in northern Nigeria, no women have yet been stoned to death. End Summary.

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Hajara Ibrahim, 18 and pregnant  
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1. On October 5 in Lere Local Government Area (LGA) of Bauchi State, 18-year-old Hajara Ibrahim was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery after becoming pregnant outside of wedlock. According to the Shari'a court that convicted her, she confessed to having sex with Dauda Sani, a boy who she said had promised to marry her. He denied ever meeting her and was released for lack of evidence, but the court deemed her pregnancy and confession sufficient to convict her of adultery.

2. Ibrahim appealed the sentence, stating that she was not married. A year earlier, her parents had arranged a marriage for her with a man in Lafia, Nassarawa State, but she never moved to Lafia to join him. Since she had never consummated the marriage, her lawyers argue, she should not have been charged adultery, but with the lesser crime of fornication, which would carry a lighter sentence: a maximum of 100 lashes with a cane.

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Daso Adamu, a 25-year-old single mother  
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3. On September 15 in Ningi LGA of Bauchi State, twice-married Daso Adamu was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery after admitting to having sex 12 times with another man, resulting in her pregnancy, after her second husband left her. Her partner was actually her first husband, who denied all accusations and was freed by the Shari'a court for lack of evidence. In October she was released on bail on grounds that because she was breastfeeding her child, who is now six months old, it was a violation of the baby's rights to keep them both imprisoned.

4. Adamu appealed her sentence on several procedural grounds, including (1) that the Shari'a court relied solely on her confession without eyewitness testimony, and (2) that no one had filed a case of adultery against her, so it was improper under Shari'a for the court to proceed with any action against her.

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Next Steps  
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5. Ibrahim's appeal began October 27, and Adamu's will be heard on November 3. Both women are receiving legal assistance from a Lagos-based NGO, BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights.

6. In principle, stoning sentences would be carried out after the women's children are weaned, so there is time for the appeals to proceed through the courts. In addition, Nigerian civil law requires state governors to ratify all Shari'a death sentences before they are carried out. Since the adoption in 2000 of Shari'a in 12 states in northern Nigeria, there have been several high-profile death sentences, but no women yet have been stoned to death.

CAMPBELL